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FM BUENOS AIRES 25/1623Z MAR 82

TO FLASH FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 101 OF 25 MARCH 1982

INFO FLASH PORT STANLEY (PERSONAL FOR GOVERNOR), INDOUK NAVY AND
CINCFLEET WASHINGTON

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YOUR TELNO 71 : SOUTH GEORGIA

1. UNFORTUNATELY BY THE TIME I CARRIED OUT YOUR INSTRUCTIONS WITH FIRST ROS AND THEN COSTA MENDEZ REPORTS WERE ALREADY COMING IN THAT THE BRITISH PRESS WAS FULL OF STORIES OF ENCOURANCE HAVING BEEN SENT TO SOUTH GEORGIA, THAT IT WAS TO TAKE OFF THE ARGENTINE PARTY AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN A BRITISH QUOTE ULTIMATUM UNQUOTE. I WAS TOLD THAT THERE SEEMED NOW NO WAY IN WHICH THE ARGENTINES COULD REMOVE THE MEN, EVEN IF THEY AGREED TO DO SO, WITHOUT APPEARING TO HAVE RESPONDED TO THREAT. BOTH ROS AND COSTA MENDEZ SHOWED AN INCLINATION TO SPECULATE REGRETFULLY HOW ELSE THE AFFAIR COULD HAVE BEEN HANDLED BY US AND HAD TO BE BROUGHT FIRMLY BACK TO FACING THE CURRENT REALITIES. WHEN THEY SPOKE OF QUOTE GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY UNQUOTE I STRONGLY DEPRECATED THE VERY UNWISE APPLICATION OF THIS PHRASE, ONLY APPROPRIATE IF WE HAD SENT ENCOURANCE TO AN ARGENTINE PORT, TO THE QUITE NORMAL EXERCISE OF THE POLICING FUNCTION OF THE ESTABLISHED, IF DISPUTED, AUTHORITY IN THE AREA.

2. TURNING, MORE PROFITABLY, TO WHAT COULD NOW BE DONE, COSTA MENDEZ SAID QUITE FIRMLY THAT HE WOULD RATHER DEAL THROUGH ME THAN THROUGH A SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE AND DID NOT FEEL THAT HE WOULD BE HELPED AT THIS STAGE BY A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT GALTIERI. HE IS HOWEVER NOW PREPARING, AT MY SUGGESTION, A MESSAGE FROM HIMSELF TO YOU AND THIS I HOPE TO TRANSMIT LATER TODAY.

3. AT HIS SUGGESTION WE ALSO AGREED THAT, WHILE HE LOOKED INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF GETTING DAVIDOFF TO ORDER HIS MEN, EVEN AT THIS LATE STAGE, TO GO TO GRYTVIKEN AND GET THEIR WHITE CARDS STAMPED, I WOULD ASK YOU WHETHER, IF THEY DID THIS, THE EXPULSION ORDER COULD BE REVOKED. THIS WOULD, OF COURSE, INVOLVE WORD EATING BY BOTH SIDES AND IT IS ONLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE DEFENCE IMPLICATIONS YOU MENTION THAT I VENTURE TO COMMEND WHAT LOOKS INCREASINGLY LIKELY TO BE THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO A BREAKDOWN STILL AVAILABLE.

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